

[Innovators, entrepreneurs share inspiration at CU Showcase](#)<sup>[1]</sup>

[2]

Pioneering solutions with the potential to impact health, climate, education, technology and lifestyle, among other areas, were on full display at the inaugural CU Showcase – Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Impact: Celebrating Four Campuses.

The Oct. 4 event at the CU Anschutz Medical Campus featured an expo of more than 35 CU innovators and their groundbreaking work; in-depth presentations from each campus; a panel about how innovation is shaping Colorado's future; and smaller breakout discussions about quantum, AI, community resilience, aging, health care, workforce development and higher education, among other topics.

[3]

The showcase resulted from the [President's Innovation & Entrepreneurship Initiative](#)<sup>[4]</sup>, an effort to leverage work happening systemwide in innovation and entrepreneurship, research, immersive education, and private and public collaborations, and to generate substantial real-world impact.

[5]

"CU is deeply embedded in Colorado's innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem as well as the nation's ecosystem," President Todd Saliman said in his keynote address at the showcase. "We're uniquely positioned to connect with Colorado's labs, startups and industries – serving as an innovation hub in the state. Our ability to build partnerships across these sectors is key to strengthening Colorado's role as a national leader in innovation."

[6]

The event drew hundreds of attendees from the CU and broader communities, as well as U.S. Rep. Greg Lopez and Colorado state Rep. Eliza Hamrick.

For more information about the showcase and the President's I&E Initiative, visit [cu.edu/impact-cu](https://cu.edu/impact-cu)<sup>[4]</sup>.

[7]

[CU awarded \\$2 million grant from U.S. Department of Justice to combat hate crimes](#) <sup>[8]</sup>

[Rodriguez honored as President's Employee of the Year](#)<sup>[9]</sup>

System Staff Council last week honored Adam Rodriguez, procurement solutions architect in the Procurement Service Center, as winner of the President's Employee of the Year Award for 2025.

Rodriguez, who was unable to attend but appeared via Zoom, received a plaque and \$1,000 award, which is presented by System Staff Council, during a ceremony Oct. 2 at 1800 Grant St. The recognition honors a staff member who goes above and beyond in their dedication and service to the university.

Last week's event also included recognition for 10 other nominees for President's Employee of the Year, and for many system administration employees who reached milestone years of service to CU during the 2024 fiscal year.

Leadership attending the ceremony included President Todd Saliman; Leonard Dinegar, senior vice president for internal operations and chief of staff; and Felicity O'Herron, vice president and chief human resources officer.

Comments from nominators and supporters of Rodriguez included:

“The solutions that Adam tested and proposed were so innovative that even the consultants, the experts of the platform, didn’t know they were possible. Without Adam’s knowledge of our processes and systems, his diligence in testing and the trust he has earned, we would not have been able to move forward with major parts of the project.”

“Adam exemplifies the true spirit of teamwork. He approaches every challenge with an open mind and a can-do attitude, consistently stepping up to support initiatives of all sizes. It is rare for a conversation within the PSC regarding customer-impacting changes not to mention Adam, either as a key contributor or as a trusted source of insight.”

“Adam embodies professionalism in every sense. He arrives at each interaction fully prepared, listens attentively and tackles every challenge with a proactive, solution-focused mindset.” [10]

Also nominated for the President’s Employee of the Year Award were:

**Taylor Craven, Employee Services.** “Taylor is the epitome of a leader. She listens to feedback of her team and works tirelessly to make improvements to our processes. She is regularly implementing new ways to ensure that the team is engaged and happy in their work. Taylor is the hardest-working person I’ve met in my eight years with CU. She is respected by everyone who knows her and gives so much of herself to her work.”

**Ashley Eschler, Employee Services.** “Ashley approaches all aspects of her job with an upbeat attitude, which helps in even the most difficult situations. When Ashley is working with me on an issue, I feel a palpable sense of relief and confidence in the guidance she provides.”

**Angelique Foster, Office of the President.** “It’s how Angelique does her work that makes her so special. Her performance in each of the aforementioned tasks is outstanding and she works exceptionally well as a member of the many teams she serves on. She’s service-oriented and keeps everyone else on task until the job is done. She makes working with her fun and rewarding. Angelique has become the go-to person for many of us in the president’s office. We know she gets things done and she has the respect of everyone that she works with.”

**Elisha Garza, University Counsel.** “Whether preparing for trial, or just in the day-to-day processing of our cases, Elisha is always mindful that we are a team and we work as one. Without a question, she is always supportive and ready to step in if our department is short-handed or if someone is out. She checks in with everyone often to see if they need help with anything or have any questions.”

**Cindy Kraft, University Information Services.** “Cindy is well-versed in UIS staff and appears to have a great working relationship with everyone. She never hesitates to step in and help out or cover for people. Cindy is who I strive to become when I ‘grow up.’”

**Kevin McCarty, University Information Services.** “Kevin exemplifies teamwork through his work on continuously improving or rolling out IT service management processes. His level of customer service is welcoming, represented by how many in UIS pull Kevin in now to various team and individual work efforts, his consult and expertise on best service management efforts. His customer service delivery has built trust, which is priceless.”

**Amber McDonnell, Board of Regents Office.** “Amber is one of the most meticulous employees at the system office and manages to balance the variety of demands from her job, professional development and her service to the CU system. I truly do not know how Amber balances the priorities of the Board of Regents so smoothly, but I am so glad that we at system have her in that role.”

**Jennifer Mortensen, University Information Services.** “She always approaches problems with a solution-oriented mindset. Jen prioritized building a unique relationship with each team member through open and transparent communication, leaving everyone feeling respected, valued and empowered. Her approachability creates a culture of innovation as she encourages new ideas and welcomes feedback.”

**Kevin Sarsen, University Information Services.** Kevin “has found the right mix of emerging technologies and technical standardization to create a service in ODIN that is stable, remains running while other UIS services are down for maintenance, and is increasingly relied on by our campus partners as their source of truth for data.”

**Audra Strang, Employee Services.** “Since her arrival, she has successfully overhauled the department by addressing complex historical issues, implementing advanced data automation and fostering a collaborative culture. Her leadership and problem-solving skills have not only enhanced efficiency and accuracy but have also strengthened relationships across multiple departments. Audra’s dedication to her team’s growth and her initiative in organizing successful employee events demonstrate her commitment to excellence and her invaluable contribution to the university.”

Employees recognized with Years of Service Awards were:

**30 Years**

Leonard Dinegar

Michael Lightner

**25 Years**

Yuki Busch

Carolyn Donadio

Betty Heimansohn

Brad Judy

Catherine McCoy

Normandy Roden

**20 Years**

Cordelia Angel

Christine Bauder

Alicia Dandeneau

Gena Escobar-Trujillo

Karyn Hardy

Cheryl Kisling

David Pierce

Heather Retzko

Jennifer Willits

Kendra Zafiratos

**15 Years**

Larissa Armand

Frances Chapman

Bob Hasenhundl

Nicole Leonhard

Jaime Mendez

Samantha Moreno

Alisha Palas

Pravija Prabhakaran

Christopher Rose

Todd Saliman

Milap Sharma

Heather Tasca

Kris Truesdale

**10 Years**

Adam Alberti-Powell

Annie Baccary

Ritu Basnyat

Joshua Brumley

Jennifer Casanova

Joseph Ciecior

Miranda Clark

Tanya Cohen

Nicole Combs

Darlene Crow

Anthony DeCrosta

Karen Dreiling

Joanna Hall

Jaimie Henthorn

Joshua Husman

Ming-Juan Jung

Brett Kellum

Aaron Mansfield

Thomas Martinez

Chad Marturano

Kristina Mendez

Mayank Mittal

Laurie Reagan

Kelly Richter

Adam Rodriguez

Laura Siedzick

Julie Steeler

Om Tandukar

Kathryn Wilson

Christen Woodburn

Jennifer Wunsch

**Five Years**

Effie Ameen

Jeanne Baak

Bijan Bewley

Janet Bravo

Minna Briscoe

Jillian Callaghan

Budy Chandra

Megan Clark

Jen D'Angelo Dekker

Shirley Eaves

Roxann Elliott

Lyndsey Fabis

Brianna Fuller

Michael Gaisbauer

Eric Gary

Zoe Geraghty

Praveen Ghimire

Stacy Gomez

Kirby Harris

Deirdre Keating

Charles Kirkwood

Aislinn Lederman

Van Lepage

Robert Linseisen-Kerley

Amelia Loving

Ryan Mannix

Beth Marcotte

Dallas Martin

Carrie McVay

Mike Monroe

Virginia Nystrom

Kendyl Polson

Erich Pomrening

Jordan Ross

Kaleb Schumaker

Elizabeth Shattuck

Kim Shaw McGregor

Elizabeth Snow-Trenkle

Ryan Snyder

Fallou Thiobane

Ashley Tillman

Daniella Torres

Sarah Tuttle

Vaughn Wennerstrom

Geoffrey Zabka

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[Coloradans flocking to entrepreneurship as small business filings continue to rise in Pikes Peak Region](#)[22]

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